The year 2006 marks the tenth anniversary since the University of Guam’s Micronesian Studies Program (MSP) produced its first Master of Arts in Micronesian Studies graduate. Established in 1993, the MSP can still claim that it is the only program in the world that offers a Master of Arts degree in Micronesian Studies.

Administered by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS), faculty from CLASS along with faculty from the Richard F. Taitano Micronesian Area Research Center (RFT MARC), the Micronesian Language Institute (MLI), and Learning Resources, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Library work together to provide an interdisciplinary environment in which university students can explore the Micronesian Region—its peoples, cultures, customs, languages, philosophies, religions, economies, environments, issues, histories, and politics.

The Micronesian Studies Program has worked in recent years to further diversify its faculty. MSP faculty currently represent the fields of anthropology, education, geography, history, library science, sociology, philosophy, planning and administration, political science, psychology, and public health. MSP has also continued to strive toward making its courses and the research it promotes responsive to addressing critical needs of the Micronesian Region.

The Micronesian Studies Program has proven to have international appeal as its graduates have hailed from various Micronesian Islands—Guam, Palau, and Woleai, (Yap state, Federated States of Micronesia); from the US mainland; as well as from some of Micronesia’s neighboring countries, specifically the Philippines and Japan.

Fully half of those who have earned a Master of Arts in Micronesian Studies thus far have done so in the last five years. Another five students are waiting in the wings.

The Micronesian Studies Program, in addition to requiring 33 credits of coursework, passing written and oral exams, and successfully writing a thesis, requires students to demonstrate proficiency in a Micronesian or topic-appropriate colonial language (excluding English). Most graduates have fulfilled this MSP requirement by proving proficiency in the Chamorro language, a statistic which corres-
ponds with the high level of theses focusing on Guam and the Mariana Islands. Other MSP graduates demonstrated linguistic aptitude in Tagalog, Japanese, Palauan, and the languages of Woleai and Mwoakilloa.

Though most of the Micronesian Studies Program’s master’s theses thus far have centered on Guam and Mariana Islands concerns, MSP student research has also explored Mwoakilloa in Pohnpei State, Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau. The more recent theses highlighted for this review expanded the program’s thesis topic horizon to include studying issues revolving around the Peoples of Woleai and Tobi (Hatohobei). One MSP thesis cast a broader research net by examining dynamics within Micronesia as a region rather than focusing on one island or political entity in particular.

Micronesian Studies Program student theses have added significantly to the limited amount of research that explores Micronesian Region issues. Michael R. Clement Jr. tackled US militarization of the island, a topic of resurging importance for Guam. On one hand, many would describe Chamorros, Guam’s indigenous People, as ‘super-patriot[s]’, as Michael Lujan Bevacqua suggested in his thesis. However, both Clement and Bevacqua revealed that a wide range of differing local sentiment regarding the US military activities on island exists. Bevacqua further explored the ways in which this sentiment shapes the construction of island history.

Daniel L. Owen gathered details of the final three months prior to the WWII Japanese invasion of Guam from the Chamorro and the US military perspectives. Tammy Ann Duchesne sought out Micronesian Islander WWII experiences of relocation, separation from family, forced labor, food shortages, loss of land and gardens, and the suffering of physical brutality by examining the songs that Micronesians composed as responses to the hardships endured.

Kelly G. Marsh (then Marsh-Kautz) analyzed how information about Guam’s different ethnic groups has been constructed in Guam history text and textbooks. Ana Lucia Hill explored the ways in which the exotic entertainment industry has become embedded in Guam society and how the peoples within that industry serve as cultural brokers. Francesca Kedlaol Remengesau gave shape and voice to the Palau Community Association of Guam’s untapped stories concerning its history of existence.

Christopher Foley delved farther back into Mariana Island history reexamining Diego Luis de San Vitores as a man and a martyr, infamous in those islands for introducing the archipelago’s first Catholic mission. Mark Alan Ombrello likewise portrayed a life history, that of Shoichi Ueda who grew up in Palau, served as an imperial naval pilot in Japan during WWII, and later became a respected member of Guam’s Palauan community.

David Tibbetts took a more ethnographic approach, exploring the Tobian community’s identity issues as a ‘marginalized minority group located on the geographical, cultural, economic, and political fringe of the ROP [Republic of Palau]. And finally, Simon Maluvelmeng, from Woleai, combined his expertise in various fields of academia with his intimate knowledge of the cultural relationship between the People of Woleai and fish of their atoll.

The Micronesian Studies Program periodically conducts student outcome learning studies. A recent study revealed that one of the program’s successes is that 45 percent of MSP graduates find acquiring mastery level knowledge of Micronesia to be relevant and useful as a working professional in Micronesia. This sentiment is likewise expressed by students who completed Micronesian Studies courses (as an elective or otherwise did not earn a Master of Arts in Micronesian Studies), evaluating their coursework experience to be of great benefit as professionals in the region.

Another success is the relatively high percentage (36%) of MSP graduates who have continued their academic careers in graduate and post-graduate programs. Thus far, MSP graduates have attained or are working toward doctorates from the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom; the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University; the University of Califor-
nia, Santa Cruz; the University of Michigan; the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa; the School of Environmental Sciences at Charles Sturt University, Australia; and the University of Auckland in New Zealand. Additionally, MSP’s most recent graduate plans to complete his second masters this year from the University of California, San Diego. Several other recent MSP graduates have expressed interest in working towards a doctorate in the near future.

MSP faculty have expanded their roles over the years. Some serve in supervisory or other positions for Micronesian Studies graduates enrolled in Ph.D. programs or for non-program graduate and post-graduate students with vested interests in the Micronesian Region. For example, currently, Harley I. Manner, MSP chair and Professor of Geography, is serving as a field supervisor for Richard K. Olmo who is working on a Ph.D. in Geography at Wollongong University, Australia; Donald H. Rubinstein, Professor of Anthropology and Public Health, is serving as an external reader for Wakako Higuchi’s dissertation in Pacific and Asian History, Australian National University; and, Anne Perez Hattori, Associate Professor of History, is Co-Supervisor for Kelly G. Marsh a post-graduate candidate in Cultural Heritage Studies, Charles Sturt University. Hattori is also serving as a Committee Member for three others: Sharleen Santos-Bamba who is earning a Ph.D. in English Composition at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Marianna Hernandez and James Viernes, who are both working toward Master of Arts degrees in Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawaii at Mānoa.

Recently, the University of Guam approved a Graduate Certificate in Micronesian Studies as a complementary program. The addition of this program allows MSP to offer their program to a broader range of scholars and professionals. A poll of University of Guam students conducted in Spring 2005 indicated definite student interest in the Graduate Certificate in Micronesian Studies program. Students will now be able to receive recognition for completing Micronesian Studies coursework undertaken for reasons other than achieving a master’s degree. There is also potential that these new students, drawn to the complementary certificate program, may spell an increased interest in a Masters of Arts degree in Micronesian Studies.

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ENDNOTES


2 The College of Micronesia located in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia does, however, offer an Associate of Arts degree in Micronesian Studies. See details online at http://www.comfsm.fm/socscie/micstudies.htm

3 Required courses: Peoples and Cultures of Micronesia, History of Micronesia, and Contemporary Problems and Issues in Micronesia. Electives: Community Development; International Business; Biometrics; Modern Pacific History from 1850 to Present; Physical Geography of Micronesia; Micronesian Philosophy; Political Development in the American Pacific; Research Methods in Micronesian Studies; Chamorro/Guam Studies; Health and Human Adaptation in Micronesia; Cultural Ecology; Religion, Magic, and Myth in Micronesia; Economic Development and Change in Micronesia; Readings in Micronesian Studies; Seminar in
Micronesian Studies; Research Methodology in Behavioral Sciences; Psychology of Women; and Micronesia and Mental Health.

Politically Tobi is part of the Republic of Palau. However, it is one of the Republic’s Southwest Islands located some 400 miles southwest of Palau’s capital of Koror, outside of ‘Palau proper.’ Its people’s culture is distinct from that of other Palauans, owing its roots to ‘islands to the east in what is now Yap State of the Federated States of Micronesia’ (Basic Information About Tobi, in *Tobi & its Friends*. Retrieved 23 October 2006 from http://tobi.gmu.edu/misc/tobiislandoverview.htm).


This percentage does not necessarily include the 36 percent of MSP graduates who are currently continuing their academic careers in graduate and post-graduate programs.

Dr. Manner also served as a field supervisor for Margie Falanruw of Yap who earned her Ph.D. in Geography from the University of the South Pacific a number of years back.

To earn a Graduate Certificate in Micronesian Studies, students must complete the three required MSP courses, two elective MSP courses, and pass the comprehensive exam in Micronesian Studies. It is meant to be a one year program though it may be tailored to better fit student needs within certain limits.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT**

Kelly G Marsh is currently researching Micronesian heritage and conservation issues as a PhD candidate in cultural heritage studies in the School of Environmental Sciences at Charles Sturt University, Albury-Thurgoona, Australia. Her doctoral work will build on her BA degrees in anthropology and history and MA in Micronesian studies from the University of Guam, her experience as the former vice-chair for the Guam Historic Preservation Review Board and the Guam Preservation Trust, and her work on Guam as an instructor of Guam history at the university and high school levels. She served as the MSP student representative from 2001-2002 and authors the Guam Year-in-review for the Contemporary Pacific Journal of Island Affairs.

Kelly G. Marsh, Post-graduate Student Cultural Heritage Studies, School of Environmental Sciences, Charles Sturt University, PO Box 789, Albury NSW 2640, Australia. E-mail kmmarsh@csu.edu.au